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Year: 2014

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**Fellini, Federico**

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Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich  
ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-84576>  
Book Section

Originally published at:

Mäder, Marie-Therese (2014). Fellini, Federico. In: Allison Jr, Dale C; Helmer, Christine; Leppin, Volker; Seow, Choong-Leong; Spieckermann, Hermann; Walfish, Barry Dov; Ziolkowski, Eric J. Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception : Volume 8: Essenes – Fire (Approx.). Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, online.

### Fellini, Federico

As one of the most influential of Italian directors, Federico Fellini (b. 1920 in Rimini, d. 1993 in Rome) created an opulent oeuvre of twenty-three feature films and three anthologies. He was also co-screenwriter with some other well-known Italian directors, such as Roberto Rossellini. Fellini was the recipient of four Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film (1954, 1957, 1963, 1974) and later received the Honorary Award from the American Academy (1993) and the Golden Lion from the Venice Film Festival for lifetime achievement (1985). Fellini represents European Art-house and *auteur* film, developing a unique filmic handwriting during his career. His cinematic roots and practical introduction to filmmaking began in the early 1940s when he worked as a screenwriter and assistant director to many productions, including some important neorealist films (e.g., *Roma, città aperta*, dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1945; *Paisà*, dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1946). As a director Fellini quickly moved away from a neo-realistic filmic style, to develop an approach more concerned with dreams and subjective visions than with social facts. Fellini's filmic style is characteristically excessive, with an overt emphasis on autobiographical topics, which traverse his narrations. Even if Fellini's childhood and adolescent memories, as he recounts them in interviews, were partly a fabrication and construction (Stubbs), nevertheless they provided a rich, indispensable, and almost limitless store of ideas with which to engage religion.

Fellini originated from a Catholic family and lived almost his entire adult life in Rome. Like other Italian directors, he chose not to film biblical topics directly, yet the institutional aspects of religion and clerical life, notably critical visual and narrative hints directed at Roman Catholicism, play an important role in many of his films. Critics often discussed the treatment of secularized Christian moral values in his early films. *I vitelloni* (1953, *The Young and the Passionate*), for example, follows four young men who live in a small Italian village by the sea in their search for entertainment. When a young girl becomes pregnant by Fausto, the leader of the group, he is obliged to care for the girl and to marry her. The film shows the struggle of the young man to bear his responsibility and to find the morally correct path. During this search, Fausto undergoes a conversion from an easy life without commitments to a severe one with family responsibilities. Of particular relevance for the treatment of religion in this film, Fausto is forced to work as an assistant in a shop selling church objects, such as statues of saints, rosaries, and crosses. The institutional aspect of religion is represented visually as a business in this early production.

The three following films, *La strada* (1954, *The Road*), *Il bidone* (1955, *The Swindle*), and *Le notte di*

*Cabiria* (1957, *Nights of Cabiria*), are often reviewed under the label of "revelation" (Wiegand). In all three films the central characters, be it Zampanò in *La strada*, the trickster Augusto in *Il bidone*, or the prostitute Cabiria in *Le notte di Cabiria*, touch on the world of sin in various ways and attempt to leave it behind, but without success. Catholic symbolism and Christian topics are a central part of the narration in all three films. In *Il bidone*, for example, a group of tricksters dress up as clerics in order to visit some poor families in the countryside. They invent a mission from the Vatican to find treasures and bones of people who were buried in the fields. As the false clerics have already buried the bones and the treasure before for themselves to "find," they claim money from the poor peasants for a requiem mass. The credulous people give all their savings for this service because they believe in the authority of the church. The film criticizes the naive and submissive faith of the rural people who trust the authority of the church and uses a group of crooks and frauds to represent the church, thus cynically criticizing its actions.

Two other commercial successes, *La dolce vita* (1960) and *8½* (1963), paint a portrait of a vain and empty society, which has lost its purpose for a meaningful life. Institutionalized religion is reflected in these films as a kind of empty shell and oppressive power. In both films Marcello Mastroianni plays the lead role, a gossip reporter in *La dolce vita* and the director in *8½*. The opening sequence in *La dolce vita* depicts, in different shots, from the ground and from the air, the flight of a helicopter carrying aloft a giant statue of Jesus Christ to the Vatican. Children, construction workers, and sunbathing young women on a rooftop wave their hands and scream when they see the unusual convoy. When the statue arrives, it is as if Rome's inhabitants are welcoming Jesus, with bells ringing in St. Peter's Square. This irritating opening sequence introduces the protagonist, a paparazzo, who follows the statue in a second helicopter. Again, Fellini humorously plays with the materiality and emptiness of Catholicism by staging this set-piece visual of a helpless Jesus being flown into the Vatican. In another scene, religion is again characterized as a superficial kinky attraction when an American film star (Anita Ekberg) visits St. Peter's basilica with a clerical-style gown cut as a tight female dress with a slim waist combined with high heels.

A sequence in *8½*, on the other hand, accuses the church of repressive power. The protagonist, a director, remembers a humiliating punishment from his youth, when he and some other boys were caught watching the dance of the prostitute, Saraghina, on the beach. The priest explains during the child's confession that Saraghina is the devil. Later the boy returns to the beach and listens to Saraghina singing. She turns toward the boy with a

look of sympathy on her face and a cordial smile. The so-called devil looks very warm and loving, the opposite of the ecclesial authorities. Fellini criticizes and accuses the exponents of the church by recalling his Catholic education. According to Fellini this sequence is an experience of his youth, but as already mentioned the biographical facts given by Fellini in interviews are not always entirely reliable. Nevertheless, the character of the director in *8½* can doubtlessly be perceived as Fellini's alter ego as the following line from the dialogue shows: "Stavo appunto spiegando che il protagonista della mia storia ha avuto un'educazione, come tutti noi del resto, cattolica, che gli crea certi complessi, certe esigenze non più sopprimibili" ("As I was saying, the protagonist of my story had a Catholic education – like all of us – which creates some complexes and needs for him that cannot be suppressed" [trans. by the author]). This dialogue is a self-reflexive moment on cinema, as the character refers both to himself and to Fellini, given the irrepressible recurrence of religion in the director's own films.

Fellini's interests in paranormal phenomena – such as occultism, spiritualism, visions, and secret séances – represent further religious dimensions in Fellini's work that go beyond Catholic symbolism. Two films in particular, *8½* and *Giulietta degli spiriti* (1965, *Juliet of the Spirits*), are concerned with religious mysticism. The character Giulietta in *Giulietta degli spiriti*, disappointed in her relationship with her husband, discovers through channeling sessions an otherworld that gives her life a new direction. In a series of dream sequences she explores the possibilities of self-exploration and experiences what sexual liberty could involve. Fellini was fascinated by the psychoanalysis of Carl Gustav Jung and his theory of dreams, especially the concepts of *animus* and *anima*, the unconscious, and the archetype (Stubbs: 37–69). The often badly reviewed film (Wiegand: 160–63) *La città delle donne* (1980, *City of Women*) can thus be read as a dream of the protagonist Sanporaz concerning his attitude towards women. In this film, dream sequences are also an important means of expressing the characters' psychic shape as they visualize the motivations and preoccupations of their inner being.

The most important town in Fellini's cinematic universe is Rome, visually and narratively represented both as the center of Catholicism, an endless source of religion, and the capital city of the Roman Empire. *La dolce vita*, *Fellini-Satyricon* (1969) and *Roma* (1972, *Fellini's Roma*) recreate the myth of one of the most ancient cities. Rome stands not only for the place of Fellini's creative world, Cinecittà, but also for the home of the popes (Bondanella 2002: 31). Vatican City and the Italian film studios are centers of cultural significance where artistic creativity, expression, and the creation of legends play crucial roles.

In *Roma*, the young protagonist, Federico Fellini, discovers Rome during World War II. By means of parallel editing, a second storyline about an international film crew in Rome in 1972 with the director Fellini, played by himself, is crosscut with the first. The associations of Rome with Catholicism and sexuality are, for example, stressed in the fashion show following the protagonist's visit to a brothel where he has sex with a prostitute. The fashion show is staged in excessive style; the authentic models look like priests, bishops, cardinals, monks, and nuns. They are wearing decadent clothes with bombastic applications made of visually precious materials and impressive accessories. As the highlight of the show the Pope model is depicted with a monumental miter and a cape decked with gems. The exaggerated representation of clerical clothing questions the lavish style of the Catholic church and its agents. Another cynical representation of the Pope is depicted in *Il Casanova di Fellini* (1976, *Fellini's Casanova*), in which the Pope is interpreted in two short scenes as an ever smiling, childish, and senile man. Fellini interprets, and therefore accuses, Catholicism by portraying its leader as the head of a decadent and perverted system.

Like *Roma*, the film *Amarcord* (1974) is a coming-of-age story strongly connected with Fellini's childhood memories, where Fascism and Catholicism determine everyday life. The story about a teenager, Titta, and his friends in a tourist village by the Mediterranean Sea, is set in the 1930s with sexuality closely associated with guilt and sin. As in *8½* the oppressive power of clerics is displayed when the young men are trapped satisfying their sexual curiosity. The mise-en-scène of the confession with the priest includes a series of subjective, meta-diegetic scenes, involving the sexual experiences Titta had in the previous months. The priest is excluded from the boy's depictions; Fellini knew that this would cause huge scandal. The handling of the double moral standards of the clergy is playfully and entertainingly presented in this sequence.

In comparison, Fellini's later productions *Ginger e Fred* (1986, *Ginger and Fred*) and *La voce della luna* (1990, *The Voice of the Moon*) seem almost reconciliatory concerning religion. In *Ginger e Fred* a television production team manages a Christmas show, in which they try to report miracles. Fellini shows how the people's private experiences are exploited and staged as a television performance for commercial purposes. Fellini's critical voice is now directed towards the emptiness and superficiality of television rather than the religious realm. Finally *La voce della luna*, his last film, enters into the poetic world of a lunatic who does not understand modern phenomena such as a loud discotheque, or an absurd Miss Farina (flour) contest or Japanese tourists; religion is almost omitted, hardly a side effect.

Fellini's unforgiving and accusatory attitude towards clerics and the Catholic church in many of

his early films softens to a mild indifference in his later films in which institutionalized religion represents a mundane and almost irrelevant part of society.

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Marie-Therese Mäder

## Fellowship

- I. Greco-Roman Antiquity
- II. New Testament

### I. Greco-Roman Antiquity

Fellowship describes a state arising from a common activity or concern between two or more parties (κοινωνεῖν) or their sharing in something (μετέχειν) (Baumert). Friendship (φιλία/*amicitia*), an extreme expression of fellowship (Hauck), was an important *topos* in the Greco-Roman world explored in numerous philosophical treatments (Fitzgerald). In the most influential of these treatises, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Books 8 and 9), φιλία refers to a relationship broader than modern friendship (Konstan). Consequently, certain aspects of Greco-Roman friendship should be subsumed under the more general concept of fellowship.

In addition to commonality, fellowship was marked out by mutuality and justice (Schofield 1999) and expressed most concretely in the *polis*, which Aristotle describes as a community of equals bound together in reciprocal relationships in which the best possible life is sought (Aristotle, *Pol.* 1252A1–8, 1328A35–36). Fellowship existed amongst those who lived together and pursued common activities like hunting, drinking, or philosophy (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1171B29–1172A15). It was also maintained through public sacrifices and meals, which expressed a city's common origin or worship of a common god. These rituals served to sustain fellowship with the gods (Plato, *Leg.* 653D, 771D–E). The exchange of benefits and gratitude further bound together members of Greco-Roman society: “the giving and exchange of favors holds together the lives of human beings” (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Ep.* 3, quoted in Inwood).

The Pythagorean school was characterized by the common life it enjoined (Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 6.18). Its members shared their possessions in accordance with the proverb κοινὰ τὰ φίλων, attributed to Pythagoras (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 8.10). The community that met in Epicurus' garden decried the common purse (10.10–11) but was equally well known for its fellowship (Seneca, *Ep.* 1.6; Clay). Amongst Stoics, the theory of “affinity” (οἰκείωσις) provided that school with

the philosophical rationale for the fellowship of all humankind (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.62–63). Under Stoic influence, the concept of the *polis* expanded to include the *kosmos* (Dio Chrysostom, *Borysth.* 36; Cicero, *Fin.* 3.64; Schofield 1991: ch. 3) which had both gods and humans as citizens amongst whom fellowship existed on the basis of right reason leading to law and justice (Cicero, *Leg.* 1.23; *Nat. d.* 2.3).

Numerous clubs and associations expressed fellowship around common political, religious, and economic interests (Kloppenborg/Wilson). Despite the different names given to these associations, it was the fellowship that existed amongst their members that defined them as such (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1160A19–25).

Commensality was an important element in establishing and maintaining fellowship (Smith). Enjoying a meal with the company of others distinguished mere “eating” (βιβρώσκειν) from “dining” (δειπνεῖν) (Plut., *Quaest. conv.* 697C). Banquets existed for eating and drinking together (συμπιεῖν/συμφαγεῖν) (643A) with fellowship (κοινωνία) as their goal (614D–615A). The presence of libations and hymns during these events indicates the importance they bore in preserving fellowship with the gods.

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Jonathan More

### II. New Testament

**Introduction.** In the NT, the noun κοινωνία and its cognates (the verbs κοινωνεῖν and συγκοινωνεῖν, the nouns κοινωνός and συγκοινωνός, the adjective κοινωνικός) occur most often in the undisputed Pauline letters (twenty-five out of forty-five occurrences). From the κοινων-group, the verb κοινωνεῖν means “to share something with someone,” and the related noun κοινωνός denotes the person who partakes or shares in something – a “partner” or “participant.” Consequently, the root idea of the noun κοινωνία is “an association, partnership or sharing with someone in something.”

**Κοινωνία in Paul.** With thirteen out of nineteen occurrences in the NT, κοινωνία is mainly a Pauline